

# Vinyl va va voom

EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

**EXCLUSIVE** Avid's latest turntable specialises in exploring the outer limits of what vinyl can achieve

**A**vid is a small company that's building a big reputation for itself on the turntable market both here and overseas. Despite the slightly Teutonic appearance this deck is made in Cambridge by an Englishman with a slightly Germanic name: Conrad Mas. Conrad's first turntable, the £5,000 Acutus, came to light in 1999 and we reviewed it enthusiastically in *HFC* 194. Last year this was followed by a 'base' model, the £2,000 Volvere, and now we have effectively a synthesis of those two models in the £3,500 Volvere Sequel.

This turntable has the platter and chassis from the Volvere coupled with the external power supply from the Acutus. The Crouzet motor is fundamentally the same as that on the Acutus but in basic unmodified form. Even so it produces a hefty 140mN of torque (note – 140 millinewtons is a lot of torque) with which it spins the heavyweight, cork-matted platter. Drive is via a round section belt, which can be made easier to hook up by fitting a match or similar item into a hole under the platter rim so that you can loop it onto the motor – no need for bent bits of wire here!

Conrad is a big fan of seriously tight record clamping. Unlike the quick-fitting clamp on an SME for example, this deck has a fine pitch clamp thread so that you can get a good purchase on the vinyl without stripping the brass spindle. In contrast, SME uses a harder spindle with a coarser thread. Avid's philosophy is that a brass bearing housing offers the best way of draining the energy created by the vinyl/stylus interface away to a part of the deck where it can then be harmlessly dissipated as heat, in this case the subchassis.

The three silver pots that surround the platter contain springs which are used to suspend the subchassis and effectively isolate them from vibration in the supporting surface – usually created by the loudspeakers. Each of these suspension posts can be adjusted for height with the large knurled feet or by turning the little posts that connect the subchassis to the springs. I levelled the chassis base using the feet and then levelled the platter with the spring posts.

## PERFORMANCE

As Avid's own tonearm is not expected until the autumn, I took the estimable SME Model V off my SME Model 20 deck complete with the vdH Grasshopper cartridge and fitted it to the Sequel. The deck can be used with a number of arms and a Rega arm base is supplied but the Model V is a mutual favourite.

This is a very impressive turntable, there's no getting away from it. Put a great record on and you hear everything, or to put it another way it extracts so much more than is usually encountered that you feel you're hearing everything there is worth hearing. The humble vinyl groove has an extraordinary ability to store information, much greater than most turntables will let you hear, in fact. The Avid taps deep into that store.

First impressions were of a bold, powerful and confident sound, with an image that sits in front of the loudspeakers to a greater degree than other sources. There's an architectural solidity to its presentation that you don't get with many analogue or digital sources, in fact hardly any of the latter, but which gives the music being played a presence and realism that is reach-out-and-touch-it real.

The above is actually a description of the music reproduced by the Avid rather than of the deck's character – this is one

## VERDICT

**Avid Volvere Sequel vinyl turntable**  
**£3,500**

▲ Remarkable transparency and resolution to the finest detail plus tremendous coherence and power.

▼ Clamp takes rather too many turns to do up/undo.

## CONCLUSION

Very impressive heavyweight turntable that will deliver all the passion, grace and fire of your favourite vinyl.

## KEY FEATURES

- High mass platter
- Easily adjustable spring suspension
- High torque motor
- Separate power supply
- Good compatibility with alternative tonearms
- Optional bent Perspex dust cover for deck and arm (£60)
- Precision engineered inverted sapphire bearing

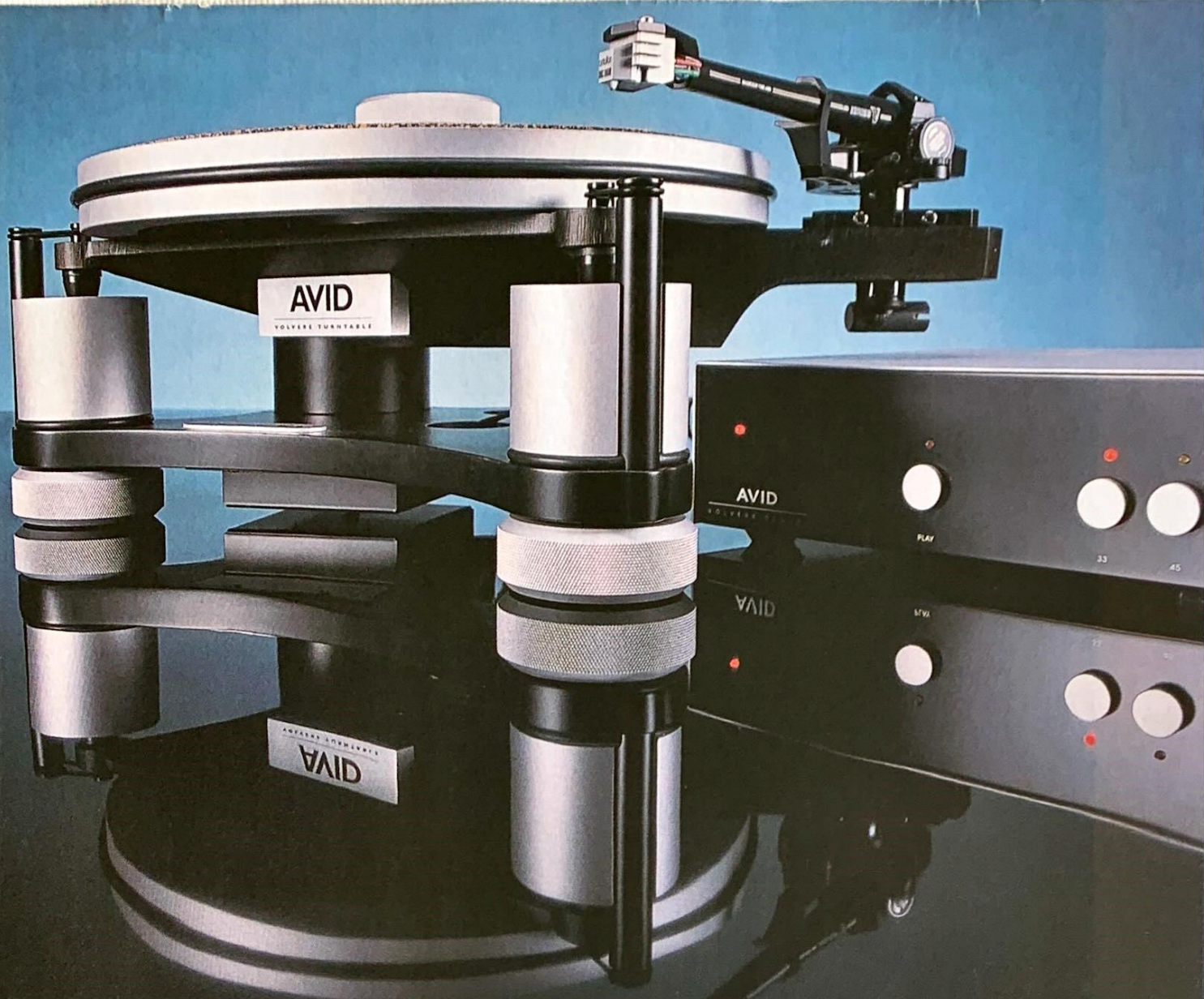


Each of the chassis' three legs can be levelled individually, and the cork-topped platter can be further fine-tuned via the springs in each leg.



The Crouzet external power supply is basically the same as the one in Avid's £5,000 Acutus model, but in a stripped-down, unmodified form.





***"This is one of the most transparent turntables I've heard and its sound seems purely to be that of the record you put on it."***

We used an SME Model V tonearm for the review, but Avid's own design should be available in the autumn.

of the most transparent turntables I've heard and its sound seems purely to be that of the record you put on it. It reveals huge variations between recordings, to the extent that one selection of discs can leave you thinking it's nothing special while another has you leaping about the room with excitement. The difference between good and bad recordings has

never been starker, so prepare for disappointment and elation, because while it will make the most of a great record it won't enliven a poor one.

The deck's precision is such that even within individual albums it draws out the great tracks from the lesser ones with ease. Take Radiohead's *I Might Be Wrong Live Recordings* – quite a few tracks sound pretty messy but the less complex acoustic guitar-based ones are clear and strong. Which could lead you to imagine that the turntable is struggling with denser pieces but Captain Beefheart's *Floppy Boot Stomp* put paid to that notion, this rhythmically contorted piece sounded supremely coherent and engaging. Other records reveal that different instruments within a piece were clearly recorded separately and in slightly different environments, Anouar Brahem's fine sounding *Barzakh* on ECM being a great example. Featuring only a few acoustic instruments recorded in ECM's characteristically clear style the Avid brought to light a wide degree of

variations in acoustic surroundings of each instrument.

This degree of precision can at times seem a little clinical and there's none of the romance that some turntables add to the musical picture, but if the record is good and if it has emotion in its grooves you'll most definitely hear it. Some might prefer a stronger emphasis on timing for instance but if you want to get to the heart of your music, neutrality is the only real way. ●

☎ Avid 01832 710370

🌐 [www.avidhifi.co.uk](http://www.avidhifi.co.uk)

#### ALSO CONSIDER

##### **SME MODEL 20.2 £3,657**

A more compact design with similar aspirations and a slightly higher quality of finish. Highly neutral sound.

##### **MICHELL ORBE SE £1,725**

Inverted bearing design with exposed suspension and an external PSU but less substantial build. Great sound for the price.

##### **WELL TEMPERED REFERENCE £5,500**

Unusual and heavily damped design with a tonearm that hangs on threads. Very strong on timing.

